

Villa Real School

Inspection report

Unique Reference Number	114345
Local Authority	Durham
Inspection number	325995
Inspection dates	4–5 March 2009
Reporting inspector	Elaine Colquhoun

This inspection of the school was carried out under section 5 of the Education Act 2005.

The registered childcare, managed by the governing body, was inspected under section 49 of the Childcare Act 2006.

Type of school	Special
School category	Community special
Age range of pupils	2–19
Gender of pupils	Mixed
Number on roll	
School (total)	75
Sixth form	23
Government funded early education provision for children aged 3 to the end of the EYFS	3
Childcare provision for children aged 0 to 3 years	0
Appropriate authority	The governing body
Chair	Mrs Judy Sunter
Headteacher	Mrs Fiona Wood
Date of previous school inspection	2 March 2006
Date of previous funded early education inspection	Not previously inspected
Date of previous childcare inspection	Not previously inspected
School address	Villa Real Road Consett County Durham DH8 6BH
Telephone number	01207 503651
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Age group	2–19
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Introduction

The inspection was carried out by two Additional inspectors.

Description of the school

Villa Real is an average size school serving the whole of County Durham with a few pupils attending from outside the county. The number of pupils has decreased slightly since the last inspection. There are three times the numbers of boys than girls. Pupils have difficulties that include severe learning difficulties, profound and multiple learning difficulties, autistic spectrum disorder and challenging behaviours. A high proportion of students receive free school meals. There is a very small minority of looked after children. All pupils are of White British heritage. Some students attending the school live in specialist residential provision specifically established so that they may attend Villa Real School. The school has gained numerous awards which include the Sportsmark and Investors in Children.

Key for inspection grades

Grade 1	Outstanding
Grade 2	Good
Grade 3	Satisfactory
Grade 4	Inadequate

Overall effectiveness of the school

Grade: 2

Villa Real is a good school with some outstanding features. The range and quality of curricular options available to pupils is exceptional. The pupils' personal development and the way they are cared for and supported is outstanding.

Leadership has ensured that the school has a positive and supportive climate in which pupils feel safe, learn and develop well. Pupils enjoy coming to school and the calm, positive ethos enables them to grow in self-belief and independence. Most of them develop these attributes extremely well. Parents confirm this, with the vast majority of responses to the parental questionnaires being overwhelmingly positive about all aspects of the school.

Pupils' enjoyment of lessons is very evident in their excellent behaviour and the great enthusiasm they have for their work. Lessons are carefully planned, taking into account the needs of each pupil. Teachers use a good range of strategies which make learning interesting and keep pupils focused. As a result of this good teaching, achievement throughout the school is good. The curriculum is outstanding. It is enriched through links with other schools and colleges, agencies and the local community.

Relationships are a very strong feature and pupils appreciate the outstanding care and support they receive; as a result, their personal development and well-being are excellent. Pupils are taught how to stay safe, make healthy choices and become responsible young citizens. Work experience and community links are used effectively in preparing pupils for their future pathways on leaving school. Pupils gain work experience through local business and charities and in some cases this continues after they leave school.

Leadership and management are good. Senior leaders are highly successful in the promotion of an environment in which all pupils feel safe and valued. Consequently, self-esteem amongst pupils is high, they actively engage with their work and make good progress. Support for staff is strong and subject coordinators have a very good understanding of what needs improvement in their areas. Guidance to pupils is very good. Nevertheless, there is a weakness in some aspects of whole school monitoring which is not yet sufficiently systematic. Opportunities are missed to monitor lessons in subjects and look for patterns in assessment data. Whole-school assessment and target setting does not consistently draw on this sort of analysis to raise achievement. Governors are professional in the way they support the school but need to further challenge the school with regard to whole school monitoring of assessment and target setting.

Effectiveness of the sixth form

Grade: 2

The sixth form is good with some outstanding features. Students make good progress and achieve well because the department is led and managed effectively. There is a clear view about its purpose and an accurate view of how it should develop and improve. The school's self evaluation of its success is accurate. The curriculum prepares students very effectively for life after school where many take up the option of continuing their education at local colleges and specialist learning and care provision. There is a good balance between developing academic, personal and vocational skills. Students' personal development is outstanding and they thoroughly enjoy their time in the sixth form. They are given expert guidance about how they are learning and making progress. Curriculum is outstanding and offers an exceptional range of vocational options which include horticulture and holistic therapies, together with a good

range of key skills which impact on students' achievement and enjoyment. Teaching is good and is personalised to meet individual needs well as is the curriculum. As a result, students make good progress and are very well prepared for life beyond school.

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

Grade: 2

Provision is good. Very few children are educated in the Early Years Foundation Stage and currently, most are attending part time. When children are admitted their skills and abilities are very limited. Teaching is good and occasionally outstanding. Adults provide exceptional care and support. This helps children to gain confidence and become increasingly independent. Children feel safe, and enjoy activities. Although they do not reach the goals set for the end of Reception and consequently enter Year 1 well below average, they make good progress given their very low starting points.

The children's learning and development are good. Strong assessment and planning ensures that activities are well matched to, and often unique to the child. This personalised learning approach is linked successfully to individual targets. Children learn both through adult led and child selected activities. For example, when improving body coordination and mobility, skilled assistants sensitively support them in their activities. Children explore and investigate the appealing indoor and outdoor resources. Outdoors they enjoy the beneficial experiences of the sensory garden or the thrill of playing in the snow on a wintry day.

Children's welfare is exceptionally well supported. Response to personal need is first class because staff implement daily routines and systems diligently. Assessments are regularly undertaken and individual education plans reviewed each term. A weakness is that the judgements made through the year are not consistent with all elements of the early learning goals. The school recognises this and is tailoring the current school assessment procedures to match the expected requirements. The Early Years Foundation Stage is well led and managed. There is a strong sense of teamwork and good use is made of staff expertise.

What the school should do to improve further

- Improve monitoring of subjects, assessment, and target setting across the school to raise achievement.

Achievement and standards

Grade: 2

Students achieve well between Year 1 and Year 11, and make good progress. Because of their learning difficulties their attainment remains far below that expected of mainstream students. This good progress is seen in all sections of the school population, including the pupils with severe learning difficulties, those students with highly complex needs and those with autistic conditions. The students who are at the earliest stages of learning receive good and well-targeted support and because of this, they make progress at the same rate as the other students. There is no evidence of underachievement by any group of students or individuals. Students make particularly good progress in learning the basic skills of communication and literacy. Most students make equally good progress in meeting their challenging individual education plan (IEP) targets in basic skills and in personal development. This has a clear impact on their good overall achievement. A very small minority of targets are mismatched to the pupils' abilities. This does not alter the good rate of progress these pupils make because the quality of teaching

and day to day feedback is good. However, the mismatch has not been identified early because of the limitations of the school's monitoring of lessons and assessment procedures. By the time students leave the school, either at the end of Key Stage 4 or in the sixth form, they achieve nationally recognised qualifications in ASDAN courses.

Personal development and well-being

Grade: 1

Personal development and well-being, including pupils' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development are outstanding. Pupils think about others in assembly, they sing, and say the short school prayer together. Their behaviour in assembly and around school is outstanding. There have been no exclusions. Attendance is below average, as many pupils are frequently absent for medical reasons.

Pupils feel very safe at school because they know they are never far from an adult who will provide them with high quality personal care and support. Pupils are keen to take part in physical education lessons. Some were thrilled to hold a trophy cup at a sports event. This typifies their excellent contribution to teamwork. Pupils' excellent community contribution has helped the school earn the Activemark Award. Older pupils can recommend a beneficial food from the range on offer at the healthy snacks shop they help to manage.

Pupils have beaming smiles as they take part in enjoyable lessons and activities that regularly provide them with outdoor learning opportunities. Pupils are acquiring life skills through school and work experience programmes. When taken alongside their good gains in basic skills most are well prepared to cope with life ahead.

Quality of provision

Teaching and learning

Grade: 2

Teaching and learning are good throughout the school, including the Early Years Foundation Stage and the sixth form. The school now provides for pupils with more complex educational needs and teachers have had to adjust their planning and teaching to take full account of the range of needs that the pupils present. In the best lessons very good planning ensures that pupils are frequently engaged in active and collaborative tasks that capture their interest and attention. The assessment procedures help identify small steps of achievement and this enables teachers to tailor activities to meet the learning needs of individuals. Excellent guidance and good use of questioning engages pupils and extends their learning. The knowledgeable teaching assistants support teachers and pupils very effectively. Teachers and staff manage behaviour exceptionally well. They successfully maintain a calm and purposeful learning environment through their expertise in creating clearly structured learning activities. These factors enable pupils to work with increased levels of concentration and help them to enjoy their lessons.

Curriculum and other activities

Grade: 1

Pupils in all Key Stages enjoy purposeful and interesting activities as the curriculum provides many excellent opportunities for learning. Pupils benefit greatly from an extensive programme of activities, visits and residential trips, which support their personal development exceptionally well and contribute positively to their achievement. The range of opportunities provided through

the 14 to 19 curriculum is particularly impressive with courses which include environmental and multicultural studies. A notable feature is the recently developed 'Forest Schools' course which offers students rare opportunities to learn and develop skills in outdoor education, for example preparing food over a camp fire in the school grounds. The curriculum successfully sets out to enable all pupils to develop confidence and responsibility and extend their knowledge and understanding of the world around them. The school works closely with other schools, colleges and employers. Sixth form courses, including work related learning opportunities, enterprise activities and a range of college courses, have been extended and are benefiting pupils as their needs, abilities and interests are met more effectively. Students gain appropriate accreditation for their work.

Care, guidance and support

Grade: 1

Care, guidance and support are outstanding. Child protection, safeguarding and risk assessment procedures meet requirements. The day-to-day procedures, supervision of pupils and attention to their personal needs includes exemplary practices, such as strict supervision of the administration of medication.

Pupils benefit from exceptional personal support provided. Staff know learners as individuals and establish an ethos of trusting relationships. Many pupils access regular programmes such as daily physiotherapy. The range of staff expertise is considerable and includes staff skilled in moving, handling and specialist feeding techniques. An exemplary feature is the high degree of efficiency in implementing the rapid response programme when pupils suddenly need personal support or when staff need additional help in managing challenging pupils. The excellent partnerships with external agencies enhance provision further. Pupils are encouraged to attend well through a school rewards system.

Academic guidance is good. Pupils receive daily feedback through positive encouragement and praise. Simple, but appropriate techniques such as 'thumbs up' are used to convey success. Older pupils are provided with clear simple guidance through the marking of their written work.

Leadership and management

Grade: 2

Leadership and management are good. The senior leadership is highly effective in creating the excellent supportive climate promoted in the school. This has made pupils feel very secure and underpins their good progress. The quality of professional training is very good and is suitably focused on raising standards. Senior leaders monitor the curriculum effectively and play a significant role in maintaining good standards of teaching and learning. Subject coordinators have a clear view in how to develop their subject areas. However, some opportunities for subject coordinators to monitor their areas are missed and therefore analysis of whole school assessment is sometimes insufficient. The school recognises this and a newly developing system of monitoring assessment and target setting is emerging. However, it is too early to evaluate the impact on pupil progress. There has been continued improvement since the previous inspection and the school identifies its strengths and weaknesses accurately. It has good capacity to improve further. Governors are actively and productively involved in the life of the school and are very supportive. However, their role in actively monitoring progress and achievement is yet not fully developed. They ensure that statutory requirements are met. Senior leaders have put

in place effective arrangements for the promotion of community cohesion. They have evaluated the success of initiatives including; pupils' contribution to the school community, for example the running of the tuck shop and with the local community through playing the hand chimes for other schools and church groups. Visits and contact with other countries are developing through linked classrooms with Kenya and pupils have the opportunity go skiing in France with other students from a local school. Villa Real delivers good value for money. Improvement since the last inspection has been good.

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Annex A

Inspection judgements

Key to judgements: grade 1 is outstanding, grade 2 good, grade 3 satisfactory, and grade 4 inadequate	School Overall	16-19
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Overall effectiveness

How effective, efficient and inclusive is the provision of education, integrated care and any extended services in meeting the needs of learners?	2	2
Effective steps have been taken to promote improvement since the last inspection	Yes	Yes
How well does the school work in partnership with others to promote learners' well being?	1	1
The capacity to make any necessary improvements	2	2

Effectiveness of the Early Years Foundation Stage

How effective is the provision in meeting the needs of children in the EYFS?	2	
How well do children in the EYFS achieve?	2	
How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the children in the EYFS?	1	
How effectively are children in the EYFS helped to learn and develop?	2	
How effectively is the welfare of children in the EYFS promoted?	1	
How effectively is provision in the EYFS led and managed?	2	

Achievement and standards

How well do learners achieve?	2	2
The standards ¹ reached by learners	4	4
How well learners make progress, taking account of any significant variations between groups of learners	2	2
How well learners with learning difficulties and/or disabilities make progress	2	

¹Grade 1 - Exceptionally and consistently high; Grade 2 - Generally above average with none significantly below average; Grade 3 - Broadly average to below average; Grade 4 - Exceptionally low.

Personal development and well-being

How good are the overall personal development and well-being of the learners?	1	1
The extent of learners' spiritual, moral, social and cultural development	1	
The extent to which learners adopt healthy lifestyles	1	
The extent to which learners adopt safe practices	1	
The extent to which learners enjoy their education	1	
The attendance of learners	3	
The behaviour of learners	1	
The extent to which learners make a positive contribution to the community	1	
How well learners develop workplace and other skills that will contribute to their future economic well-being	2	

The quality of provision

How effective are teaching and learning in meeting the full range of learners' needs?	2	2
How well do the curriculum and other activities meet the range of needs and interests of learners?	1	1
How well are learners cared for, guided and supported?	1	1

Leadership and management

How effective are leadership and management in raising achievement and supporting all learners?	2	2
How effectively leaders and managers at all levels set clear direction leading to improvement and promote high quality of care and education	3	
How effectively leaders and managers use challenging targets to raise standards	2	
The effectiveness of the school's self-evaluation	2	2
How well equality of opportunity is promoted and discrimination eliminated	2	
How well does the school contribute to community cohesion?	2	
How effectively and efficiently resources, including staff, are deployed to achieve value for money	2	
The extent to which governors and other supervisory boards discharge their responsibilities	3	
Do procedures for safeguarding learners meet current government requirements?	Yes	Yes
Does this school require special measures?	No	
Does this school require a notice to improve?	No	

Annex B**Text from letter to pupils explaining the findings of the inspection**

6 March 2009

Dear Pupils

Inspection of Villa Real School, Durham, DH8 6BH

On behalf of the inspection team, I would very much like to thank you for making us feel so welcome when we visited your school. We enjoyed talking to you. I thought you might like to know what we thought about your school.

Your school is a good school with some excellent features. These are its strengths:

- the school is a happy place to be and you really enjoy being there
- you work hard and make good progress in your work
- you do outstandingly well in your personal development and your behaviour is excellent
- you are very well looked after and staff do their best to make sure your lessons are interesting and fun
- the older students amongst you have lots of opportunities to learn skills which will be useful when you leave school
- you also have the chance to mix with students from other schools. This will help you to be more confident when you go into new situations.

The headteacher and the senior team know how they want your school to be better. I have asked them to check the information about how well you do more often and make any changes needed to help you improve your learning.

You can help them by continuing to do your very best and making the most of all the opportunities the school provides for you.

Thank you again for being so helpful and friendly. We wish you every success in the future.

Yours sincerely

Elaine Colquhoun AI

Lead inspector